

Horningsea Scrapbook 1897 to 1990

Facts, Features and (occasional) Fallacies
reported in Cambridge Newspapers

summarised by

Mike Petty

Most of these stories originally appeared in the Cambridge Daily/Evening/News or the
Cambridgeshire Weekly News, its sister title.

They are supplemented by some articles published in the
Cambridge Independent Press or Cambridge Chronicle

Most were featured in my 'Looking Back' column in the Cambridge News from 1996-2014

The complete 'Cambridgeshire Scrapbook' of which this is a small section is published online at
bit.ly/CambsCollection

I have digital and other copies of most of the stories summarised.
I hope to publish these online one day. If you would like them in the meantime then please get in
touch.

The original volumes are housed in the Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library
where there are many other indexes dating back to 1770.

They also have detailed newspaper cuttings files on over 750 topics that have been compiled since the
1960s.

Newspapers sometimes get things wrong. I copy things out incorrectly. Do check

There are a multitude of spelling and layout errors. Please forgive or correct them

News never stops but this file was finished on 31 August 2016.

I will maintain supplements and corrections – contact me for anything you need

Please make what use of these notes that you may. Kindly remember where they came from

See my website – www.mikepetty.org.uk for further notes.

Mike Petty, Stretham

2016

1898 08 10

Cyclists, pedestrians, lovers of the free and open road, dwellers in and around Horningsea and Waterbeach, all interested in this district, harken. There is yet hope for you that the last relic of antiquated obstruction - the obnoxious toll at Clayhithe Bridge - may be swept away. You have to pay every time you go over, and people on the other side of the river are obliged to use the station for produce of all sorts, and for every load that comes over they have to pay 4d. Many people would make use of this road from Cambridge were it free, as the road is good, and a convenient circle may be traversed round by the bridge and back this other way.

1899 05 01

Horningsea Friendly Society, p2

1902 05 16

Sir – now everyone is thinking how best to celebrate the Coronation I suggest that this is a suitable time to free from toll the bridge at Clayhithe. If that were to be thrown open it would be a great boon to hundreds of people both at Cambridge and Waterbeach. The Cam Sailing Club have their headquarters there and cyclists should move to free the bridge, as one of the prettiest rides around here is through Horningsea, Clayhithe, Waterbeach and Milton – R.P.B.

1906 06 30

Horningsea churchyard consecrated – 06 06 30c

A verdict of suicide was returned on a Horningsea man who had cut his own throat. The inquest had been held in the Crown and Punchbowl inn although it was illegal for an inquest to be held in licensed premises. This was because the clergyman had previously refused permission for the use of the schoolroom and the school managers said they could not give permission without his approval. This was the only village in the district where the coroner had any difficulty getting use of the schoolroom. Many witnesses objected to going to a pub to give evidence 10 04 15a

1912 03 01

G.H. Pearson coal merchant of Milton and two or three men were carting firewood across the river in a boat from the Horningsea side, leaving a horse attached to a heavy tumbrel cart on the towing path at the point where the Milton Fen road branches off from the river. The horse took fright at something and backed down the bank – which is very steep – into the river. It got across to the Horningsea side, then turned round and came back as far as it could where it had to stay until the men reached it with the boat. They freed it from the cart when the animal scrambled out, none the worse for its cold bath. Eventually the cart was also got out. 12 03 01e

1912 07 26

Ditton Walk and Horningsea wives seek court action over husbands cruelty – 12 07 26 & a

1914 11 13

Belgian refugees – Carlton, Waterbeach, Bassingbourn, Sawston, Willingham, Horningsea, Elsworth, Fowlmere, Ickleton, Cheveley

1914 11 20

Horningsea – eight serving, two wounded

1916 08 02

Runaway Horse. Female workers from Chivers' fruit farms in a lorry had an alarming experience coming through Milton on Monday evening. The horse bolted and went about a mile before being pulled up. A Mrs. Benstead, of Horningsea, who jumped off the lorry and sustained rather severe injuries, was unconscious for some time. Mr. Scriven, who was passing, took her in his sidecar to Dr. Robson's, where she received attention and was conveyed home.

1920 11 12

Horningsea war memorial unveiled

1922 06 22

The report of Chesterton R.D.C. Housing Committee showed numerous applications had been received for a reduction in rent of the Council houses. After discussion it was decided that the rent should be £20 per annum where the total income was 50 shillings a week or over, and £17 per annum when the income was less. The Architect reported that the final accounts for the erection of 36 houses in Comberton, Haslingfield, Horningsea, Lt Shelford and Willingham had been sanctioned by the Ministry

1925 07 06

As from July 1st all policemen will live rent free, the Chief Constable reported. The need for a police house at Harston was very urgent because the owner of the house which the policeman now occupied had been waiting until the officer moved before he could get married. The new Cambridge town planning scheme was bringing a road from Cherry Hinton to the Ditton and Horningsea road and they wanted a site on the Cambridge side of the new road. At Burwell the police house was complete, with the exception of the water supply

1925 11 07

There are at least two very happy married couples in Cambridgeshire today. In Melbourn there dwell Mr & Mrs John Preston Hall, who were married 68 years ago. They have lived in the same old-world thatched cottage in Drury Lane for 65 years. He is a working carpenter and at one time there were seven of his people all over 70. In Horningsea are another married couple whose name, curiously enough, is Melbourn, who celebrate their diamond wedding. Mr Melbourn worked on one farm from early boyhood until a few years ago. Hearty congratulations to both couples on their wonderful record

1928 06 21

Fen Ditton school has been inspected but no attempt should be made to improve the existing buildings. Improvements would cost £1,800 but owing to the cramped nature of the site it would be a waste of money to try and patch up the old school and far better to spend a bit more and have a new one. It was possible that the population would increase and if a suitable site was available Horningsea School could be grouped with it, with a consequent saving in salaries.

1928 07 18

An important scheme for the making of a new road from Cottenham to Wilburton and the erection of a bridge over the Old West River near Twentypence Ferry will come before the County Council at their next meeting. They considered a petition from inhabitants in Horningsea and Waterbeach that the council should take over Clayhithe Bridge and abolish the tolls but are unable to recommend the purchase of the bridge at present. It was only 11 ft 6 inches wide and could not be widened without being rebuilt; it would only carry a vehicle of an axle load of eight tons and the approach roads were difficult.

1930 04 15

"S.O.S. Wanted a Wife. A real girl, not a church prude". These notices have been placed by a Horningsea bachelor on the front of his cottage. He assured a News representative that he is quite serious. He describes himself as a poet and farmer, born in County Cork, but refuses to divulge his age. He went to sea and lived in the USA before coming to the village two years ago. He has published one volume of poems but complains that with working in his garden and preparing meals, he has no time to write. When he marries he will write a 'best seller'. 30 04 15a & b

1930 04 19

The Horningsea man who placed notices in front of his cottage appealing for a wife says he has been inundated with letters. They have come from all parts of the country, including Jersey. Many have

come from London, from Mayfair as well as Hampstead, from servant girls as well as from girls who run their own cars. One letter enclosed a photograph of a delicate, refined-looking blonde, whom he declares he will probably marry. But he will reply to all letters and hopes to have a June bride. 30 04 19a

1930 07 10

Writing from Horningsea, Mr Hewson Cowen the bachelor who some time ago put up a notice advertising for a wife states: "I am engaged to marry Miss A. Fitch from Fulham and will be married on September 23rd in London. I desire to thank the Cambridge Daily News for the kind publicity leading to such a happy result." 30 07 10

1930 08 08

Opening Horningsea Hospital fete Miss Francis recalled that many people from Quy used to walk to the village on Sundays to attend church as they only had one service in their own. About 40 years ago, there being a good many men out of work, a scheme was financed for digging coprolites but the venture failed after four years. Ten years later Quy started their Nursing Association and the first patient was from Horningsea. 30 08 08

1932 02 16

Two houses at Horningsea which were subject of a demolition order had been bought for £200 by a working man who claimed that if they were repaired they would stand as long as the parish church. Councillors would be made to look as silly as school children if people could go behind their backs and sell property which was the subject of a demolition order. But he'd bought the houses for half the original price and had no intention of repairing them: he just wanted the land at the back. 32 02 16

1932 04 19

Two houses at Horningsea that had been condemned for demolition were sold for £200 – they had fetched only £150 ten or 12 years ago. The new owner thought they could be repaired satisfactorily. Three quarters of the thatched houses in the area were not half as sound as these were and on that basis at least 300 houses must be condemned. But the demolition order was confirmed. 32 04 19

1937 02 13

Sir – I remember Ditton Docks some 70 years ago. It was then a small landing stage, long disused and out of repair. There was also a more pretentious one further down the river – Horningsea Pier we used to call it - and I was told that in pre-railway days this had been extensively used. My father would speak of the times, before the present locks were installed, when strings of barges were kept waiting sometimes for several weeks for the river to rise sufficiently for them to come up. They carried coal and corn to Mill Lane or timber and sand to Walnut Tree Lane (now Avenue). Dant of Dant's Ferry had a fleet of barges at that time – A. Cox 37 02 13

1937 06 24

Fatal air crash at Fen Ditton kills Horningsea man – 37 06 24 & a

1939 11 30

Over possessed an obsolete Merryweather manual fire engine dated 1789 which with three lengths of unserviceable hose and eleven buckets was valued at £7 10s. Willingham's 1827 manual engine with trailer tank, ladders and hose was valued at rather more - £14. Other parish engines at Caxton, Cottenham, Horningsea, Oakington and Swavesey would be acquired by Chesterton District Council at the valuation price 39 11 30

1940 04 05

Golden Wedding.—Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Coote, of High Street, Horningsea, celebrated their golden wedding on April 1. They have spent all their married life in Horningsea and have brought up a family of 10 children. Although 75 years of age, Mr. Coote, who served for many years on the Parish Council, still goes to work, and until recently was carrier for the village with his pony and cart.

1940 08 23

Long Service Award. — During the past week. Mr. Vincent M. Heath, of Horningsea, has received the Special Constabulary Long Service Medal. In a letter which accompanied the medal, the Chief Constable of Cambridgeshire (Mr. W. Winter) states: I have pleasure in forwarding you herewith a medal which His Majesty the King has been graciously pleased to award you for your services in the Cambridgeshire Special Constabulary, with the hope that you will have good health to wear the medal for many years

1949 03 18

Proposals for further extension of Cambridge boundaries to meet housing needs were disclosed at the Town Council. It is now suggested that Barton, Coton, Madingley, Fen Ditton, Girton, Horningsea, Grantchester and Teversham should be included.

1951 08 18

The Leys School's survey of Horningsea gives a complete picture of the village. Nearly every house has a radio set, there are 18 telephones and six television sets. Dances are not heavily attended; communication with Cambridge is not good and people do not risk the bus service to go to the pictures. As for occupation the report shows that residents are mainly concerned with the production of food. They are keen newspaper readers, especially on Sundays, but only 16 take the Cambridge Daily News

1957 05 10

In 1941 common land known as 'Quy Fen', was given over to grazing. When the war finished it was re-seeded and hired by a local farmer. Then three years ago 50 acres was ploughed up, causing an uproar. Now the 'Quy Fen Enquiry Committee' wants the County Council to investigate the actions of Horningsea parish council where three councillors and the chairman have resigned. 57 05 10a

1958 09 02

Last week's rain caused flooding at Horningsea because the ditches could not cope with the excess of water. One farmer, Mr H. Lewin, had to plough in 30 acres of sugar beet as it could not get through the ground. Every storm or shower brings the water back to clog the land and conditions are very bad. More than a quarter of the barley and oat crops have been lost already and the wheat harvest has not yet started. Men aged 70 cannot recall such a poor harvest in their lifetime. 58 09 02

1958 12 03

Fen Ditton is a village that should remain static in population, councillors say. Sufficient provision has been made for necessary housing development and it would be wrong to allow the erection of nine houses at Horningsea Road. Valuable agricultural land would be lost and it would cause a traffic problem. But there was already a police house there and alternative sites would not be available, the developer claimed. 58 12 03

1961 11 10

Next Sunday the Vicar of Horningsea will probably walk from his rambling vicarage to the village church, open the door for a few minutes, close it and walk back home. For nine times out of ten nobody arrives and on the rare occasion that they do he conducts a service for three or four people. There is no organist or choir so no hymns are sung and he does not preach a sermon. This state of affairs has been in existence for some years. "It seems a shocking waste of time for me to be out here", he says 61 11 10a

1962 11 15

Sir – the Vicar of Horningsea says the village is not church minded. Few attend services, there is no organist or choir, hymns are not sung and he does not occupy the fine Elizabethan pulpit. But he has made no serious attempt to bring people to church, he does not visit parishioners nor mingle with them. Nor does he provide a Sunday School. His interest in the parish is such that, Sundays excepted,

the vicar leaves for Cambridge by the 10.10 am bus and does not return until late afternoon. The church needs repairs costing £9,000 but an appeal brought in just £35 and he has no plans or suggestions for raising the rest – S.G. Buttress, People's Warden 62 11 15b Parish asks vicar to clear up garden – 62 11 15c

1962 11 19

Only three go to church at Horningsea – 62 11 19a

1962 12 07

John Shrive had osier beds at Horningsea and Fen Ditton until he died 40 years ago, employing five men to grow and cut them with bundles kept moist in the Green End ditch until needed. Most of the women of Fen Ditton were employed in peeling or cleaving on a casual basis, sitting on each side of the road with their bundles beside them. Stripped osiers were collected by horse and cart then taken to Mr Shrive's workshop in East Road where they were woven into baskets to be sold from his shop on Peas Hill. School reports up to 1912 list frequent absenteeism with children 'helping with rod peeling' 62 12 07a

1966 12 10

Emily Mary Gingell, partner of family firm at Horningsea, dies – 66 12 10

1964 04 11

John Wilson of Horningsea has transformed a 60-year-old mouldering waterlogged hulk which had foundered in Burwell Lode to a trim cabin cruiser. It has been refitted using mahogany from an old grand piano. John, a 16-year-old naval student, has always had a strong interest in boats and the sight of the Santa Anna lying derelict resulted in discussions with his father. He baled it out and rowed it home. Now it will be relaunched 64 04 11 photo 64 04 13a

1964 09 26

Horningsea cemetery consecrated – 64 09 26b

1975 08 18

Fears are growing that the interchange between the Northern By-pass and Horningsea Road at Fen Ditton will bring serious traffic problems to the area. The Environment Secretary accepts that traffic would increase by 50% but considered the benefits to other roads in Cambridge far outweighed the disadvantages which the village might suffer.

1975 10 10

Complaints have been made about the growing number of large container type vehicles using Waterbeach and Horningsea as a means of bypassing congested Cambridge streets. But the county surveyor pointed out that the building of the Northern By-pass would do away with the problems now being caused in the narrow winding village streets.

1979 11 24

Fen Ditton residents are bringing pressure to close the Horningsea junction on the Cambridge Northern By-pass, opened less than a year ago. They claim their village is being destroyed by the great influx of traffic, much of it heavy lorries, using the narrow winding road as a short-cut to the by-pass. Residents of the Dudley and Howard Road areas also complained that vast numbers of cars flood through their estates. But councillors say that the point of the junction is to allow traffic to use the main road instead of going through the city streets.

1980 08 14

Tennis star Virginia Wade's father is to be asked to chip in to help save Horningsea's medieval church. It needs £10,000 to repair the leaky roof and tower which is too unsafe to allow the church bells to be rung. Now Canon Eustace Wade who was vicar in the 1930's is one of the prominent people who will be approached as part of a money-raising appeal 80 08 14a

1984 06 26

Horningsea village sign was unveiled by Radio Cambridgeshire's Ian Masters. It was designed and painted by local resident, Peter Halford and made by a class of boys from Bottisham Village College. A time capsule containing information and items from the village has been built into it. 84 06 26 p13

1985 03 06

Cambridge's Sunday trading row could flare up again following a decision by the Co-op to resume opening at its Beehive Garden Centre. Two of its main competitors – Scotsdale at Shelford and Ansells at Horningsea - are in South Cambridgeshire where the district council had not so far taken action against them. The City council's policy is to respond to complains about Sunday trading some of which come from shop unions like Usdaw which fears that members could be exploited. However the Beehive staff get premium rates for their Sunday stint and the following day off. 85 03 06b

1986 11 12

Armed robbers brandishing a sawn-off shotgun burst into Fen Ditton post office just before closing time and terrified the postmaster into handing over £2,000 in cash. They fled in a white Ford Cortina they'd stolen hours earlier. The car was found abandoned down a farm track at Horningsea and the men are thought to have crossed Baitsbite Lock into Fen Road, Milton, where they had a getaway car waiting. Detectives say the raid is identical to one at Haslingfield in February. The Post Office has designated Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire as a 'high-risk' area because of the huge number of robberies 86 11 12

1986 12 11

Horningsea parish church is coming out of the 'dark ages'. After 700 years of being lit by candles and oil lamps it is to be hooked up to mains electricity and water supplies. At present water for the font and flowers is brought in by the bucket load. For church goers – who sometimes have trouble reading their hymn books – the biggest bonus will be heating. The church gets freezing in winter months and parishioners have learned to wrap up well on Sunday mornings. 86 12 11

1988 09 09

A 'park-and-float' scheme is being considered to beat traffic chaos in Cambridge. Commuters would park beside the river at Fen Ditton, Horningsea, Waterbeach or Clayhithe and take a river bus into the city, having breakfast en route and reading the morning newspapers. Meanwhile the Cam Conservators may appoint its own trouble-shooter patrolling from Byron's Pool to Bottisham Lock in a specially-adapted electric craft. He would crack down on unregistered punts and also clear rubbish and broken branches in a new drive against pollution. 88 09 09a